oh! BROTHER

DATE: JANUARY 12, 1993
TO: NOMAS
FROM: NIKKI CRAFT

REGARDING VERNON MCCLEAN'S MEMORANDUM WRITTEN TO NOMAS COUNCIL MEMBERS ENTITLED "MY DECISION ON ARIZONA".

(Reprinted from Activist Men's Journal)

In the last two weeks I have learned that in early 1991 Vernon McClean (Chair of the [so-called NOMAS Committee on Eliminating Racism taskforce) wrote a memo (attached here) to NOMAS Council Members regarding his decision to support the Arizona boycott by not attending the NOMAS conference that was held in Tucson. In the memo Vernon agreed with John Stoltenberg's political analysis of the Arizona boycott "wholeheartedly."

In the memo Vernon documented that "one member of the Council said that [Vernon] had waited too long to let NOMAS know that [he] would not attend." **Also Vernon was told that if he "did not attend the Arizona meeting, it would place NOMAS in an embarrassing position."** Read that last sentence again. It's important.

When I began making phone calls about this memo I quickly learned that it was submitted to *Brother* and that it was not published. What did appear in the next issue of *Brother* was a general piece written and submitted by Vernon *before* NOMAS decided to boycott the Tucson boycott. Vernon's published piece, since it was written before the boycott, didn't even mention Tucson. It was such a glaring omission that Vernon was later challenged for it by a white man who was unaware of what had happened to him behind the scenes.

That issue of *Brother* included a barrage of responses to John Stoltenberg's statement (the one that Vernon went on record agreeing with in his unpublished memo). Bob Brannon and Phyllis Frank's co-authored writing on the subject sounded more like they had become representative for the Chamber of Commerce when they took it upon themselves to pump up the image of Tucson and extensively research why it was practically a person's civic duty to invest their dollars into Arizona's economy. To NOMAS, crossing the Arizona state line became an honorable endeavor where the offender, unlike most any "scab" crossing a picket line, was being offered spiritual safety and peer acceptance rather than "moralistic" political analysis. When I recently saw Jack Nicholson on Entertainment Tonight calling the Colorado Boycott "rubbish" unfortunately I thought of Bob.

Sam Sappington's played hard ball when he responded to John. Sam named the strategy of pulling football games out of Arizona by the NFL (if the NFL could figure out there was a boycott it's hard to know why NOMAS didn't have a clue) as "strong arm tactics". (Hell hath no fury like a Sensitive New Age Guy deprived of his Sunday Football game.) Sam went on to say: "I am somewhat saddened by the fact that key members of our Leadership Collective have chosen to boycott our national conference

this year, but certainly respect their decisions. I also feel a rather painful and irritating sting after one of our most eloquent and influential thinkers has turned his sharp intellect and pen against the very organization that has given him his largest platform. It's certainly a testament to John Stoltenberg's ability to find traces of "the enemy" in every man and every male-dominated organization."

Sam who did print John's statement on the front page later apologized (according to several people) for not printing Vernon's memorandum at all stating that when he received it that he had not realized the submission had been intended for publication in *Brother*? Five people wrote rebuttals to John's statement in the same issue. There was obviously a concentrated effort to seek these articles out. Why did no one think to ask Vernon McClean for CER's position on the boycott for publication in that same issue? Also, why wasn't Vernon's memo printed in the next issue of *Brother*?

Had Vernon's memo not been excluded from that issue of *Brother* it would have been far more difficult for Bob Brannon (and others) to smear and marginalize John Stoltenberg for doing nothing more than espousing *(in a reasoned, polite article)* the alleged anti-racist principles of the organization. By not printing it they marginalized Vernon too. But more than that, if Vernon's article had appeared it would have looked absurd for these WASP males to be claiming that black people weren't supporting the boycott. And those that shut Vernon up well knew that, too. The silencing of the Chair of the Committee on Eliminating Racism (!) - no matter how deliberately or perhaps inadvertently it may have happened - on the topic of Tucson is politically despicable.

In Bob Brannon's response to John Stoltenberg (passed out in Tucson) subtitled: "A response to John's Incorrect Information" he said, "If John had actually LISTENED TO PEOPLE OF COLOR [Bob's emphasis] who are working for the King Holiday rather than deciding from a continent away on the "morally" right thing for him (and everyone else) to do, much of this painful damage would have been avoided." *What might have happened if NOMAS had listen to the few black men working in its own organization?*

NOMAS council arrogantly and assumptively expected Vernon to work in direct conflict with his own best political interest. It's problematic don't you think when a bunch of white men, who have erected a facade organization that rewards its officers with conferences and long, fancy titles (often for doing little or nothing) - and that long ago ditched whatever political values it may have ever had in exchange for political power maneuvers of the worst kind - it's problematic don't you think when they work to get men of color to serve *their* interests so *they* can feel "safe" and not lose money or be inconvenienced by moving their conference to another location?

The established pattern of defensive responses of the current NOMAS Chair committee, and their accusations of "intimidation," as if they are being attacked anytime anyone demands accountability, is ironic since it appears to be them (not just in this instance, either) using the strong arm tactics to stifle political dissent.

Those in NOMAS who were aware of these events (the memo and the failure of *Brother* to print it) and who allowed the organization to continue to operate without a confrontation are the true embarrassment. They do not deserve our respect. Those who were responsible (yes, there should be an inquiry) for *attempting* to coopt Vernon McClean's and CER's desperately needed political agenda owe them an apology.

NOMAS also owes its members and the political community a detailed explanation about this memorandum, as well as an apology for their insidious response to it (and the boycott) and for the pressure they placed on Vernon to toe a line in favor of a racist, protect-the-good-ol'-boys, reactionary politic, too. It should not have to be the task of Vernon McClean to make this organization "comfortable" about its racism - or its apathy.

Consistency Integrity & Accountability

Speaking of embarrassing positions . . . To give credibility to such a - as they say - dysfunctional organization is complicity. So that the good men - and there are some - who have remained in this organization had better either get it walking its talk or they better walk themselves because any future alliance with The **N**ational **O**rganization for **M**orally **A**mnesiac **S**elf-involvement will be an embarrassment to those with scruples who remain, unless these issues are sufficiently resolved. There are those of us who are going to see to that.

No more sweet talk. We want action! Call it intimidation if you like. Or, if you care to employ a more truly pro-feminist/anti-racist interpretation, with just a litte dash of analysis about power imbalances, then you might want to think of it more as a **demand** for political consistency, integrity, and accountability.

Make no mistake about it. You guys will be deciding the future of your organization in San Francisco this weekend.